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TAGS: PGOV PREL MOPS MARR PTER IZ UK NATO
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR, CG AND PM DISCUSS DIYALA, UK AND NATO
SECURITY AGREEMENTS, PM VISIT TO DC

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher R. Hill for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (S) Summary: In their weekly meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on May 28, the Ambassador and MNF-I Commanding General Odierno discussed the timing of the PM's proposed visit to the U.S. (late June or July), the PM's eagerness to involve U.S. firms in oil contracting, possible means of easing sectarian tensions in Diyala province, and the status of UK and NATO security agreements being negotiated with the Government of Iraq (GOI).

¶12. (S) Summary Continued: The Ambassador, CG and PM discussed concerns of sectarian tensions rising in Diyala Province. The PM defended GOI arrests as based on legal warrants and good evidence, whether against Sunnis or Shia, and criticized the actions of the recently arrested Diyala Provincial Council member as destabilizing. The Ambassador emphasized the need for the GOI to successfully negotiate a security agreement with NATO, which the PM said was almost guaranteed. By contrast, he blamed the current impasse in negotiations for a UK-GOI security agreement on the UK's increased demands and inflexibility but said he was still open to negotiating with them if they changed their position. End Summary.

PM's Visit to the U.S.

¶13. (S) The Ambassador and Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki discussed the timing of the PM's upcoming visit to Washington. The PM mentioned that his office was considering June 15, but that it could happen later in June or in July. Both agreed that this visit was very important and should focus on economic issues. The PM expressed interest in meetings with American companies during his visit and in setting up a future investment conference like the one recently held in London.

Expediting Oil Contracts

¶14. (S) The PM expressed particular interest in meeting with Exxon Mobil and Chevron, as he is seeking a way to expedite contracts for the development of major oil fields in Iraq. He said that he does not believe the Council of Representatives will approve a proposed hydrocarbons law before the parliamentary elections, so the GOI needs to use the old law and direct contracts to not lose any more time. The Ambassador said that the U.S. has found an advisor, as requested by Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, to assist the GOI on its oil contracting procedures. He said that this will not be someone connected to any oil companies but a technical expert who can assist the GOI in developing its bidding process. The PM expressed a preference for direct contracts over lengthy competitive bidding procedures.

Sectarian Tensions in Diyala

¶ 5. (S) The Ambassador raised concerns about sectarian tensions were rising in Diyala Province, noting that this was also a cause for concern in Washington. The PM expressed disappointment in the amount of attention paid to the detention of Sunnis when the GOI also detains numerous Shia on a daily basis. He defended recent arrests, saying that all are conducted based on legal arrest warrants with solid evidence behind them. He claimed that the GOI is going after criminals and killers in Diyala just as it has in Basrah and as recently as May 27 in Karbala when Iraqi forces arrested a group of Sadrists there.

¶ 6. (S) The PM said that he had refrained from carrying out many arrests before the new provincial councils were seated to avoid aggravating political tensions, but the situation in Diyala was heating up and the GOI could not stop conducting all arrests against individuals it knew were bad. He mentioned as an example the man who claimed to be Abu Omar al-Baghdadi - the government had no choice but to go after him. The PM said that he will not back off from arresting any Sunni who kills people, as he will not back off from arresting a Shia who does so, or an Iranian or a Syrian who kills people as well.

¶ 7. (S) The Ambassador asked if the PM had explained these points to the Sunni community. The PM said yes, there was an ongoing dialogue and all parties were informed of what the

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GOI was doing. The "only" ones who agree or understand are the Iraqi Islamic Party and Tariq al-Hashimi. The PM said that there is some concern among the Shia community, though, that the U.S. is biased in favor of Sunnis. He said that he knows the U.S. is trying to be fair, but Shia clerics have a powerful media machine, which some use to promote a negative view of U.S. forces.

¶ 8. (S) The PM said that he is very worried about the potential return to sectarianism in Iraq, which he is convinced will be started by the Sunnis. He mentioned his belief that Saudi Arabia is attempting to instigate the Sunnis to start sectarian violence. The PM said that improving Iraqi-Saudi relations is impossible, despite U.S. efforts, because the Saudis believe that his government is composed of non-believers. The PM also mentioned Syria, saying that Iraqi forces yesterday detained a Syrian national who had come to Iraq to conduct a terrorist act, and the GOI has sent his taped confession to the Syrian government to press the Syrians to uncover the extremist cells that are sending fighters to Iraq.

¶ 9. (S) The Ambassador and CG both expressed concern about all communities in Iraq. General Odierno emphasized to the PM that the problem in Diyala was the fact that a member of the Provincial Council had been arrested, which could create instability. The PM said that this individual had arrived at his position through elections, which the PM supports. The problem was that some officials came into the provincial government with a plan to rid Diyala of Shia and to instigate problems with the Kurds to the north. These individuals had arrest warrants outstanding prior to the elections but the PM froze the warrants and let the individuals run. Once they got into office and began implementing their plan of destabilization, however, the PM said that he had to act.

Progress in Diyala Security Operations

¶ 10. (S) The PM acknowledged that there had been problems in ongoing Diyala security operations, including some U.S. field

commanders not communicating with their Iraqi counterparts or Iraqi commanders not trusting the U.S. forces in the province. General Odierno agreed that there had been some coordination issues, but reported that had he visited Diyala several days prior and believed commanders had worked out much better coordination arrangements. He said that overall, he thinks the operations in Diyala have gone well and are making progress.

¶11. (S) The PM brought up the Diyala Operations Commander, General Tariq, saying he was a Sunni and that the PM had appointed him purposefully so as to avoid the perception that a Shia was targeting Sunnis. General Odierno said that General Tariq is very impressive, is tactically and operationally proficient, and requires little assistance from the U.S. in his planning and operations.

UK and NATO Security Agreements

¶12. (S) The Ambassador emphasized the need for the GOI's negotiations with NATO on a security agreement to be successful. The PM responded that the NATO security agreement is "almost guaranteed" because "NATO's demands are not as high as the UK's." He indicated a UK-GOI agreement was still not entirely impossible but said that the problem was the UK's insistence on raising its demands, causing the Council of Ministers to reject the agreement. The PM noted that the UK had wanted to raise the number of personnel to 1,000, which sent a negative message about the situation in Iraq. The UK also wanted jurisdictional immunity even at Iraqi joint camps, the PM said, which would mean that a UK soldier could kill an Iraqi on the facility with no consequences, which was unacceptable.

¶13. (S) The PM asked General Odierno to prepare U.S. ships to take over on a temporary basis. He said 15 new patrol boats that Iraq is purchasing from the U.S. are en route, along with a patrol vessel sailing from Italy. General Odierno told the PM that the U.S. would be able to mitigate UK forces' departure from the naval mission to secure Iraq's oil platforms in the Persian Gulf, although it would be difficult. He said that the U.S. would work this issue but would not be able to immediately mitigate the UK's maritime training mission, where the UK departure will leave a gap.

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¶14. (S) The PM said that he was willing to cooperate, and mentioned that the UK planned to send an envoy, but said that this envoy needed to come to Iraq with new ideas. The Ambassador stressed the importance of Iraq maintaining a positive relationship with the UK, which serves as a permanent member on the UN Security Council, and the PM acknowledged that he hopes they will be able to come to agreement. He said that in terms of the UK's mission, training and naval support are exactly what Iraq needs.

HILL